

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

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S E C R E T BEIRUT 2550

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E.O. 11652: XGDS

TAGS: PEPR PINT LE

SUBJ: SOUTH LEBANON: CONVERSATION WITH FOREIGN MINISTER BOUTROS

REF: (A) JERUSALEM 1285, (B) BEIRUT 2493

1. CALLED ON FOREIGN MINISTER BOUTROS MAY 5 TO TELL HIM I WAS LEAVING NEXT DAY ON CONSULTATION ORDERS AND WOULD BE GONE UNTIL END OF MONTH. HE NOTED THAT LAST TIME I LEFT THE SITUATION HAD DETERIORATED AND HOPED THIS WOULD NOT BE THE CASE THIS TIME. HE FELT THIS WAS CRITICAL PERIOD AND SAID HE WAS UNHAPPY I LEAVING NOW. I SAID THERE MANY CRITICAL QUESTIONS TO DISCUSS WITH USG AND THAT FURTHERMORE CURRENT PRESS ARTICLES IMPLYING I WAS INTERFERING IN FORMATION NEW GOVERNMENT, ETC., MADE IT ADVISABLE FOR ME TO GET OUT OF TOWN FOR A WHILE. MY PROFILE WAS TOO HIGH.

2. WE DISCUSSED SITUATION IN SOUTH AND I SAID WE UNDERSTOOD UN COMMAND WAS CONSIDERING POSSIBILITY WITHDRAWING FRENCH TROOPS FROM TYRE AND PUTTING THEM ON PERIMETER. BOUTROS IMMEDIATELY SAID HE DID NOT KNOW ABOUT MILITARY PRO'S AND CON'S BUT HE THOUGHT FROM POLITICAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL POINT OF VIEW IT WOULD BE A MISTAKE. PALESTINIANS WOULD REGARD IT AS VICTORY AND LEBANESE WOULD LOOK AT IT IN SAME LIGHT. I SAID THAT MIGHT BE TRUE, BUT I THOUGHT FRENCH WERE IN IMPOSSIBLE POSITION IN TYRE.

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3. BOUTROS THEN PROCEEDED TO ANALYZE SITUATION IN TERMS VERY SIMILAR TO THOSE IN OUR 2493 REPORTING MY LAST CONVERSATION WITH FRENCH AMBASSADOR, I.E., IF PALESTINIANS ARE SERIOUS ABOUT MOVING INTO AREA AND WILL NOT RESPECT UNIFIL MANDATE, LATTER WILL SOON BECOME SUPERFLUOUS BECAUSE UNABLE TO COPE WITH SITUATION. HE SAID THIS WAS GOING TO BE CRITICAL TEST FOR UNITED NATIONS. IF IT FAILS, UN FORCE CONCEPT WILL NO LONGER BE FEASIBLE OPTION AND

AREA WILL INEVITABLY GO TO SOVIETS AS AFRICA IS ALREADY GOING.

4. BOUTROS SAID HE THOUGHT U.S. AND WESTERN EUROPEAN POWERS SHOULD GET TOGETHER AND DECIDE ON A COMMON POLICY TO CONFRONT THE PRESENT DANGER. UNLESS THEY TOOK RESOLUTE POSITION, THEY WOULD FIND THEMSELVES ISOLATED IN INCREASINGLY RADICAL WORLD. I SAID IMPLICATION HIS REMARKS WAS THAT HE THOUGHT UNITED NATIONS SHOULD BE PREPARING TO FIGHT PALESTINIANS. THIS WOULD BE A VERY DIFFICULT IDEA TO SELL. HE NODDED UNDERSTANDING BUT SAID FUTURE OF UNITED NATIONS WAS AT STAKE.

5. BOUTROS THEN ASKED ME WHAT WAS U.S. POLICY WITH REGARD TO SOUTH AND I SAID WE WERE URGING UNCONDITIONAL ISRAELI WITHDRAWAL FROM ENTIRE AREA. BOUTROS SAID HE DOUBTED VERY MUCH WHETHER ISRAELIS WOULD WITHDRAW ANY FURTHER IN VIEW PALESTINIAN ACTIONS. WHY SHOULD THEY? IT WOULD SIMPLY MEAN TURNING THE AREA OVER TO THE PALESTINIANS AGAIN. NO, HE WAS CONVINCED ISRAELIS WOULD STAY ALONG THEIR NEW LINE AND EVENTUALLY WOULD ATTACK PALESTINIANS AGAIN AND THERE WOULD PROBABLY BE ANOTHER WAR. I SAID IF ISRAELIS DID NOT WITHDRAW THERE WAS GOING TO BE A GREAT DEAL OF AGITATION AT UN AND ELSEWHERE AND THIS WAS INEVITABLY GOING TO PUT LEBANESE GOVERNMENT IN VERY EMBARRASSING POSITION. BOUTROS SHRUGGED HIS SHOULDERS AND SAID IN EFFECT, SO WHAT? LEBANESE WERE TIRED OF SPARING THE ARABS. IT WAS TIME THEY ALL FACED UP TO THE TRUTH. IF THEY DID NOT BRING PALESTINIANS UNDER CONTROL AND PERMIT UNIFIL TO PERFORM ITS FUNCTIONS, THEY SHOULD HAVE TO FACE THE MUSIC.

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SOUTH WAS ALREADY LOST AND COUNTRY WAS ALREADY 80 PERCENT PARTITIONED AS A RESULT ARAB INABILITY CONTROL PALESTINIANS. LEBANESE WERE FED UP.

6. I ASKED HIM WHAT HE THOUGHT ABOUT POSSIBILITY OF MODUS VIVENDI WITH PALESTINIANS. HE SAID PALESTINIANS WERE TOTALLY UNRELIABLE BECAUSE THAT WAS THE NATURE OF REVOLUTIONARIES. IT WOULD BE EASIER TO REACH MODUS VIVENDI WITH SYRIANS. HE HOPED PRESIDENT SARKIS WOULD SOON BE GOING OVER TO SEE ASSAD TO TELL HIM JUST HOW DESPERATE LEBANESE SITUATION WAS. SYRIANS DID NOT UNDERSTAND LEBANON AND WERE SO DOMINATED BY BLOCKHEADS IN THE BAATH THAT HE WONDERED WHETHER THEY WERE CAPABLE OF UNDERSTANDING. IN ANY EVENT, HE HOPED THAT WE MIGHT BE ABLE REPAIR THE GROUND WITH THE SYRIANS BY GIVING THEM OUR OWN ANALYSIS OF DANGEROUS SITUATION HERE. HE DID NOT WANT US TO DO THIS NOW, BUT A LITTLE LATER WHEN THE TIME WAS RIPE. WE AGREED HE WOULD GET IN TOUCH WITH CHARGE LANE ON SUBJECT.

7. COMMENT: BOUTROS DESCRIBED THESE REMARKS AS BEING PERSONAL AND UNOFFICIAL, AND I THEREFORE ASK THAT HE BE PROTECTED. I DO NOT KNOW HOW CLOSE HIS VIEWS ARE TO THOSE OF SARKIS, BUT HE IS REFLECTING GENERAL CHRISTIAN DISTRESS IN WAKE OF TYRE INCIDENTS.

ALONG WITH THE REST OF US, HE WAS HOPING PALESTINIANS WOULD NOT TAKE ON UNIFIL. THOSE HOPES SEEM TO HAVE BEEN PRETTY WELL DASHED, PLO'S KS ALLEREB ASSURANCES TO THE CONTRARY NOTWITHSTANDING (WE WONDER IF WALDHEIM MAY NOT HAVE MISUNDERSTOOD ARAFAT'S CIRCUMLOCUTIONS IN THIS RESPECT).

8. BOUTROS DESCRIBED HIMSELF AS BEING SLIGHTLY DEPRESSED, BUT IF SO, I WOULD HATE TO SEE HIM REALLY THAT WAY. HE COMMENTED THAT THERE WAS NO STABILITY IN LEBANON, THERE WAS NO GOVERNMENT AUTHORITY, AND THERE PROBABLY WOULD NOT BE UNTIL THE STATE WAS SOMEHOW PARTITIONED. HE SAID IT WOULD BE IMPOSSIBLE TO HAVE A LEGAL PARTITION, BUT THERE WOULD BE INCREASINGLY CLEAR DE FACTO PARTITION ALONG THE LINES OF FEUDA TERRITORIES CONTROLLED BY GWMG LEADERS ON BOTH SIDES. THIS WAS SOMETHING HE WAS GOING TO TRY

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TO MAKE THE SYRIANS UNDERSTAND IN ORDER TO GET THEM TO TAKE A MORE ACTIVE ROLE VIS-A-VIS THE PALESTINIANS. GOL COULD NOT USE ADF TO CONTROL CHRISTIANS WHEN IT HAD NO CONSEQUENCE THAT IT WOULD ALSO MOVE AGAINST PALESTINIANS.

PARKER

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